



Virginia State Sports Photo

**DR. HENRY FRAZIER III:** CIAA coaches say Frazier's Virginia State Trojans will take the 2024 football title.

## ALL EYES ON

CIAA, BIG SOUTH / OVC PREDICTIONS; McNAIR DOC ON NETFLIX; NEW HOME FOR SWAC TOURNEY

## 2024 CIAA FOOTBALL PRESEASON PREDICTIONS

### 2024 CIAA FOOTBALL PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

1. Virginia State
2. Virginia Union
3. Fayetteville State
4. Johnson C. Smith
5. Bowie State
6. Winston-Salem State
7. Shaw
8. Lincoln (Pa.)
9. Livingstone
10. Elizabeth City State
11. Bluefield State

### OFFENSE

- Tight End**  
Kalen Carver, Virginia Union\*
- Offensive Linemen**  
Michael Todd, Fayetteville State\*  
Jamaree Moyer, Virginia Union\*  
Darius McDuffie, Winston-Salem State\*  
Mathias Nielsen, Virginia Union +  
Bruno Onwuazor, Virginia State +
- Wide Receivers**  
Malachi Langley, Lincoln (Pa.)\*  
Ah'Shaan Belcher, Shaw +
- Quarterback**  
Isaiah Freeman, Lincoln (PA)\*
- Running Backs**  
Jada Byers, Virginia Union\*  
Zechariah Adams-Duckson, Eliz. City St.\*

### 2024 PRESEASON ALL-CIAA FOOTBALL TEAM

### DEFENSE

- Defensive Linemen**  
Isaac Anderson, Virginia Union\*  
Saevion Gibbs, Shaw\*  
Camar Kyle, Winston-Salem State +  
Jaylyn Norris, Winston-Salem State (Bluefield State) +
- Linebackers**  
Benari Black, Johnson C. Smith\*  
Shamar Graham, Virginia Union\*  
Jaden Echols, Livingstone\*
- Defensive Backs**  
Kolby Merritt, Fayetteville State\*  
Justin Fleming, Winston-Salem State\*  
Devin Williams, Bowie State\*  
Jahad Green, Lincoln (PA)

### SPECIAL TEAMS

- Kick Returner**  
Zyair Tart, Lincoln (PA)
- Place Kicker**  
Brady Myers, Virginia Union\*
- Punt Returner**  
Larry Hackey, Virginia Union
- Punter**  
Josiah Boyd, Fayetteville State\*

\* - Returning 2023 All-CIAA First Team selection  
+ - Returning 2023 All-CIAA Second Team selection

# Virginia State picked to win CIAA football

SALEM, VA - The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) unveiled the 2024 Predicted Order of Finish (above) as selected by the 11 members of the CIAA Football Coaches Association and the all-CIAA Preseason Football Team (also above) voted on by the leagues head coaches and the Sports Information Directors Association.

The predicted order and preseason team were both unveiled during the CIAA's annual football media day here last Wednesday.

Virginia State and Virginia Union were selected by league coaches to finish first and second respectively in the conference's new, no-divisional format. Each team will play an eight-game conference schedule this season with the top two teams meeting in the championship game.

The 2024 CIAA Football Championship Game is slated for November 16 in Salem, VA (Salem Stadium). The championship game will move to Durham, N.C. in 2025.

Last year, the Panthers of Virginia Union finished 10-1 overall, won the North Division crown with a 5-0 record and claimed their first CIAA title in 22 years with a 21-10 win over

the South Division champ, Fayetteville State in the final championship game between division winners.

VUU is led by head coach **Dr. Alvin Parker** and features senior running back **Jada Byers**, last year's CIAA rushing leader.

But it was VSU, now in its third year under head coach **Dr. Henry Frazier III**, that led the voting among head coaches. The Trojans finished 8-2 overall and tied with **Bowie State** at 3-2 in the North Division behind VUU in 2023.

FSU (8-3, 5-0 S), led by head coach **Richard Hayes Jr.**, was the third pick of the head coaches. **Johnson C. Smith**, led by head coach **Maurice Flowers**, finished 7-3 overall and 3-2, tied for second with **Livingstone** to FSU in the CIAA South. The Golden Bulls were the fourth pick. **Bowie State**, led by head coach **Kyle Jackson**, was picked fifth.

**Winston-Salem State** was sixth, **Shaw** seventh, **Lincoln (Pa.)** eighth, **Livingstone** was ninth, **Elizabeth City State** 10th and **Bluefield State** 11th.

The preseason 2024 all-CIAA team features 23 returning players from the 2023 team, 18 first teamers including Byers and 2023 CIAA



Freeman

Byers

Offensive Player of the Year **Isaiah Freeman**, junior quarterback of Lincoln (Pa.).

Freeman was the conference's top passer last season with 2,312 passing yards, completing 150 of 262 passes that included 25 touchdowns. Freeman ranked second on the team with 497 rushing yards on 115 carries. Freeman's top target was all-CIAA first teamer **Malachi Langley**, who hauled in 46 receptions for league-bests of 1,042 yards and 11 TDs.

Byers led the conference in rushing with 1,186 yards on 205 carries and accounted for a league high 16 touchdowns. The Hammonton, N.J. native led the Panthers with 118.6 rushing yards per game and 5.7 yards per carry.

## UNDER THE BANNER

WHAT'S GOING ON IN AND AROUND BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS



Tennessee Titans Photo

**STEVE "AIR" McNAIR:** Record-setting Alcorn State and NFL quarterback's 2009 murder is still baffling.

### STEVE McNAIR'S MURDER SUBJECT OF NETFLIX DOCUMENTARY:

Netflix's UNTOLD documentary series will return next month featuring an episode about the murder of former **Alcorn State** and NFL quarterback legend **Steve McNair**.

The McNair doc is part of a three-week event that will begin Aug. 20 with the premiere of **UNTOLD: The Murder of Air McNair**, which is directed by Rodney Lucas and Taylor Alexander Ward.

The death of McNair in a 2009 murder-suicide, two years after his retirement from the NFL, shocked fans then and since and has left lingering questions.

He was shot and killed by Sahel "Jenni" Kazemi, his 20-year-old mistress, on July 4 of that year. Kazemi shot McNair while he was asleep on her couch and then shot herself in the head. The deaths were quickly ruled a murder-suicide by authorities but suspicion still lingers that it was a double execution.

The Tennessee Titans held a two-day memorial for McNair following his death and retired his No. 9 jersey.

McNair was a prolific, record-setting quarterback and three-time offensive player of the year in the **Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC)** who won the 1994 **Walter Payton Award** as the top offensive player in then NCAA I-AA (now FCS) football. He earned the nickname "Air" for his prodigious ability as a passer and playmaker.

His scintillating play in his senior campaign saw him finish an unprecedented third in the 1994 Heisman Trophy race, the highest finish ever for a black college player. In his college career, he passed for SWAC and I-AA records of 14,496 yards and 119 touchdowns and set numerous I-AA single-game and career records for total offense.

He was drafted third overall in the 1995 NFL Draft by Houston and played 11 years for the Oilers who later moved to Nashville, Tennessee and became the Titans. McNair played the final two years of his 13-year career with the Baltimore Ravens. He was a three-time Pro Bowler and 2003 co-MVP who led the Titans to Super Bowl XXXIV in the 1999 season.

The series will also include documentaries about Michigan football's sign stealing scandal and Hope Solo's battle against U.S. Soccer.

UNTOLD: Sign Stealer, directed by Micah Brown, premiers Aug. 27 and UNTOLD: Hope Solo vs. U.S. Soccer, directed by Nina Meredith, premiers Sept. 3.

### HBCU BASKETBALL SHOWCASE ON CBS:

NEW YORK - CBS Sports will present two HBCU rivalry games in the CBS Sports Classic: HBCU Showcase, a men's college basketball doubleheader highlighting the HBCU experience.

The action begins on Saturday, December 28 with **North Carolina A&T** hosting **North Carolina Central (NCCU)** at 2:00 PM, ET and is followed by **Howard** visiting **Hampton** at 4:00 PM, ET.

The games, which will be hosted by the teams from the Coastal Athletic Association (CAA), will be played on campus - North Carolina A&T's Corbett Sports Center and the Hampton University Convocation Center - and will capture the passion, tradition and rich history of HBCUs and their fans.

The CBS Sports Classic: HBCU Showcase will be broadcast nationally on the CBS Television Network and streamed live on Paramount+.

# BCSP Notes

### Tennessee State picked fourth in Big South-OVC football

NASHVILLE - The Tennessee State football team was picked fourth in the Big South-OVC Preseason Poll as the league released the ranking ahead of last Wednesday's Virtual Media Day.

Led by fourth-year head coach **Eddie George**, the Tigers received 41 points in the poll, a promising position for a team coming off its first winning season since 2017 (6-5, 2-4).



George

The Tigers had a total of 12 players at every position chosen to the league's Players to Watch list. They include lineman **Eriq George**, linebacker **Ahmad Nelson** and cornerback **Jalen McClendon** on defense, return man **Dayron Johnson**, placekicker **James Lowery**, punter **Jackson Foster** and long snapper **Carson Buchannon** on special teams and quarterback **Draylen Ellis**, running back **Jordan Gant**, wide receiver **Jalal Dean**, tight end **Jason Hoath Jr.**, and lineman **Connor Meadows** on offense.

Big South-OVC teams will play an eight-game round robin schedule this year with the Association champion receiving an automatic bid to the FCS Playoffs.

The 2024 season marks the second year the Tigers will compete in the joint OVC-Big South Association conference. TSU will play eight conference games. Matchups include Tennessee Tech, Charleston Southern, Lindenwood, Eastern Illinois, UT Martin, Western Illinois, Gardner-Webb, and SEMO.

TSU will kick off its season in Nashville against **Mississippi Valley State** on August 31 in the **John Merritt Classic**. The game will kick off at 5:00 p.m. CT and will be televised on ESPN+.

### BIG SOUTH / OVC PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

- UT Martin (5) - 61
- Eastern Illinois (2) - 53
- Southeast Missouri (2) - 51
- Tennessee State - 41
- Gardner-Webb - 40
- Charleston Southern - 27
- Tennessee Tech - 24
- Lindenwood - 18
- Western Illinois - 9



### 2024 SWAC Digital Network football schedule

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.- The **Southwestern Athletic Conference** announced its 2024 SWAC Football schedule to be streamed on the **SWAC Digital Network** on YouTube highlighted by several highly anticipated games.

**Bethune-Cookman** will kick off league coverage on Saturday, September 7th when the Wildcats host Mercer at 2:00 p.m. CST.

### GAMES TO BE STREAMED ON SWAC DIGITAL NETWORK

Date	Time (CST)	Matchup	SDN	Date	Time (CST)	Matchup	SDN
Sat, Sep 7	2 p.m.	Mercer at Bethune-Cookman	SDN	Sat, Oct 12	6 p.m.	Southern at Texas Southern	SDN
Sat, Sep 7	6 p.m.	Kentucky State at Alabama A&M	SDN	Sat, Oct 19	2 p.m.	Bethune-Cookman at Miss. Valley State	SDN
Sat, Sep 7	7 p.m.	Arkansas Baptist at Arkansas-Pine Bluff	SDN	Sat, Oct 26	2 p.m.	Missi. Valley State at Ark.-Pine Bluff	SDN
Sat, Sep 7	6 p.m.	Lane at Jackson State	SDN	Sat, Oct 26	6 p.m.	Grambling State at Texas Southern	SDN
Sat, Sep 14	6 p.m.	Georgetown at Alabama A&M	SDN	Sat, Nov 2	2 p.m.	Grambling State at Bethune-Cookman	SDN
Sat, Sep 14	6 p.m.	Edward Waters at Alcorn State	SDN	Sat, Nov 2	2 p.m.	Prairie View A&M at Miss. Valley State	SDN
Sat, Sep 21	6 p.m.	Central Arkansas at Arkansas-Pine Bluff	SDN	Sat, Nov 9	2 p.m.	Alabama A&M at Arkansas-Pine Bluff	SDN
Sat, Sep 28	6 p.m.	Alcorn State at Mississippi Valley State	SDN	Sat, Nov 9	2 p.m.	Texas Southern at Alcorn State	SDN
Sat, Oct 5	2 p.m.	Virginia-Lynchburg at Texas Southern	SDN	Sat, Nov 16	2 p.m.	Bethune-Cookman at Texas Southern	SDN
Sat, Oct 12	2 p.m.	Miss. Valley State at Alabama State	SDN				

The schedule of SWAC games includes several homecoming matchups featuring **Virginia-Lynchburg** at **Texas Southern** (Oct. 5), **Bethune-Cookman** at **Mississippi Valley State** (Oct. 19), and **Mississippi Valley State** at **Arkansas-Pine Bluff** (Oct. 26).

Bethune-Cookman at Texas Southern will conclude league coverage on the SWAC Digital Network on Saturday, November 16th.

See the SDN schedule below.

### SWAC men's and women's hoops tournaments moving to Atlanta in 2025

ATLANTA, Ga.- The **Southwestern Athletic Conference** has announced that its upcoming men's and women's basketball tournaments slated for March 11-15, 2025 will be hosted in Atlanta at the Gateway Center Arena.

"We're extremely excited to host our upcoming men's and women's basketball tournaments in the city of Atlanta," said SWAC Commissioner **Dr. Charles McClelland**. "The Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA) has been a tremendous partner in working with us to make the relocation of our basketball tournaments a reality."

"Atlanta is one of the top tourist destinations in the country and hosting our tournaments here will undoubtedly give our fans and supporters a wide variety of travel options, lodging accommodations, and recreational activities upon their arrival. Atlanta is also a very unique fit for this event when you analyze the significant amount of membership alumni and fan bases already located in the Greater Atlanta area.

"Our overall vision is to make the SWAC men's and women's basketball tournaments a signature destination event filled with exciting high-level competition on the court and a plethora of entertaining ancillary events off the court that will uniquely enhance the overall tournament experience for all attendees."

The Gateway Center Arena in College Park is a state-of-the-art 5,000-seat venue located in Metro Atlanta's Southside—a few minutes from downtown via MARTA or the highway, and a two-minute Skytrain ride from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

Operated by the Georgia International Convention Center (GICC), the GCA is home to professional sports, concerts, graduations, and conventions. It is also the official home to the WNBA's Atlanta Dream and Atlanta Hawks G-League team, the College Park Skyhawks.

Additional information regarding ancillary events, tournament promotions and ticket sales will be released at a later date.



GATEWAY CENTER ARENA: Outside view.



GATEWAY CENTER ARENA: Inside.